DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 332 351 EA 023 008

AUTHOR Jones, Thomas H.
TITLE Is There a Conservative Ideology of Education?
PUB DATE Apr 91
NOTE 41p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, April 3-7, 1991).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Conservatism; *Educational Principles; Elementary Secondary Education; Government School Relationship; *Ideology; Liberalism; Political Attitudes; Political Influences; Politics of Education; *Social Theories; *Traditionalism

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses: (1) the link between the conservative education policies of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher and conservative educational thinking; (2) political, economic, and sociological conservative theories; and (3) characteristics of conservative thinking in education. The extent to which conservatives hold congruent or distinctive views about education is explored to determine whether or not a conservative ideology of education exists in the United States. The first section of the paper reviews the works of American theorists who advocate traditional educational content and modes of learning from different perspectives. A conclusion is that all agree that the primary task of education is the intergenerational transmission of knowledge. The next part compares the left- and right-wing perspectives, respectively, of Antonio Gramsci and Giovanni Gentile, two Italian theorists of the 1920s and 1930s. A discussion of the academic problems of the slower learner from the conservative viewpoint follows. Regarding the politics of Reagan and Thatcher it is suggested that there is a poor fit between the tenets of conservative political programs and those held by conservative theorists. The paper concludes that there are no fixed tenets of educational conservatism and that conservative thinking in education cannot be understood through a political program, but only through a convergence of ideas. (31 references) (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED332351

Is There A Conservative Ideology of Education?

Division F
American Educational Research Association
Chicago, Il.
April, 1991

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

T. H. Jones

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Thomas H. Jones
Department of Educational Leadership
University of Connecticut
Storrs, CT. 06269-2093

CG023008

Is There A Conservative Ideology of Education?

I will begin this paper with my own mental journey into the topic. Four years ago I had the intention to investigate the Education policies of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Acknowledged conservatives, by 1988 these leaders' political platforms had evolved along similar lines.[1] The outlines of recent conservative policies are by now quite well known. Detailed description is outside the bounds of this paper, but three basic elements are these:

1. a more rigorous academic curriculum--emphasis on the high culture and advanced technology at the higher levels of the system, "basic skills" at the lower levels,

2. aligning school activities and structures to state purposes--accountability mechanisms focusing on results, new or revised state examination systems with tougher standards, thereby allegedly promoting higher levels of student achievement, and

3. replacing bureaucratic school structures with market structures--reduction of paperwork and administrative reports, offering parents a choice of schools within the state system, state finance of private schools to add additional parental autonomy, and additional mechanisms to bring the teaching profession in line with the new goals.

Conservative school reforms have gotten much further in Britain than in the United States, owing chiefly to the Parliamentary and unitary systems of government in the former. But it is fair to say that, in broad outline, Britain has done what William Bennett, Ronald Reagan and George Bush would like to have done, had they been able.

Behind the political initiatives lie conceptions of social/educational problems, and a sort of functionalist mentality which implies that school

problems are capable of solutions based on shifts in political programs. High on the list of social problems is loss of competitiveness for American and British products in the international marketplace. And secondly there is a lax, excessively tolerant morality in which anything goes.

Conservatives locate these problems partly in state schools. Tenure guarantees, neighborhood school assignment, and other state protective structures result in an educational system which need not be too concerned with the knowledge, habits and skills of its graduates. The skepticisms of intellectuals have transformed the teaching profession in unwanted ways. The result in both countries has been a decline in the work ethic, and, on a world comparative basis, a decline national wealth and power.

My original intention of four years ago was not merely to catalogue the similarities in policy between the Thatcher and Reagan administrations, but also to elaborate ways in which present school polices fit the conservative tradition in political thought. And indeed, antecedents can be found. [2]

But in the meantime it had become clear that the school policies put forward by conservatives in the 1980's were increasingly popular across a much larger portion of the political spectrum. Neil Kinnock, the shadow Prime Minister, has vowed to retain substantial parts of the Thatcher education program if the British Labour Party comes to power. In the United States, Democrat governors and congressional leaders are by now about as likely to espouse the goals of school accountability and international economic competitiveness as Republicans are. And in the country of New Zealand school choice policies were implemented by the Lange government, one which was quite far left in environmental and national defense matters.[3.]

Kinnock, Lange and even American liberal Democrats do not *describe* themselves as conservatives. Their ideological orientations are quite different. This fact made me question my initial enterprise linking Reagan-Thatcher school policies exclusively with conservative political thinking. But I had a fall back position in the notion of "hegemonic

ideology"[4] A particular social group--conservatives in this case--had formulated their position in such a way that it had assumed national and general social approval. Under this interpretation the dominant school policies of our time might still be politically "conservative" ones. Persons holding other ideological views have simply been co-opted. The wide acceptance of school choice, traditional morality and academic rigor does not mean that these are not conservative; it simply means that politically conservative views about education have at present become bipartisan.

My problem, as I reasoned it, was that I had confused ideology with practical politics. Politicians may espouse popular views in a search for votes (a severe interpretation). Or they may rationalize their personal opinions to fit the contemporary social milieu (a more benign interpretation). But either way legislation, speeches, and party platforms are not the place to establish consistent relationships between politics and education. I felt my initial effort to establish consistent relationships between political ideology and education *policy* was ill conceived. I had better look instead only at political and educational *theorists*. These people, uncorrupted by the demands of office, would share recognizably conservative points of view in education and politics.

Conservative ideology and education

At any point in time, the number of significant theorists is few. The number who write about both politics and education is still fewer, and the number of conservatives is minuscule. Therefore I would have to look not only at contemporaries; I would have to look back in time as well. I found this prospect somewhat disconcerting: educational history and theory have not been my academic fields. (The phrase "educational theory" seemed vague to me in graduate school. It was not a popular subject then, and it has, I take it, slipped further out of fashion.)

Definitions of the words "conservative" and "ideology" also required some attention in an analysis of this nature. Conservatism as a self- conscious political philosophy is generally traced to the writings of Edmund Burke in the late eighteenth century, especially his *Reflections on the Revolution in*

France. Burke believed in an aristocratic government: rule by a few public spirited people of sound and independent judgement. He had no canons for the selection of leaders with such temperaments, assuming simply that British practices of his day worked well enough. The test of leadership was simply the order, tranquility and sense of appropriateness which followed from it. History, the slow evolution of a nation's constitution and its wide-spread acceptance are the justifications of government, the British or any other. Burke's particular *bete noir* was the notion of abstract rights. He viewed the French Revolution as particularly dangerous: atrocities had been committed in the name of human rights. Liberty, equality and fraternity are not to be understood through sententious moralizing. Burke himself contributed nothing in particular to education theory and certainly nothing to considerations of contemporary mass education, something which he hardly could have conceived.

A second type of conservative thinking is associated with economics. And already here problems of terminology and meaning emerge. So-called "Classical liberalism" is today considered conservative. It is associated with private enterprise unfettered by government interference and a minimalist state. The other side of economic conservatism emphasizes government cooperation with business enterprise to foster economic growth and the geopolitical interests of the nation-state.

Classical liberalism is associated with both Locke and Smith. Though he did write on both economics and education, Locke was a rationalizer and abstract thinker if there ever was one. He was, therefore, no conservative in the Burkean sense.[5] Locke argued for the sanctity of private property and the limited state. It is his conclusions rather than his epistemology which have a conservative appeal. Adam Smith was a conservative in many ways. His theories of the market grew from perspicacious observations of the economy and society of his day, with which he was fundamentally in sympathy. Smith wrote little about teaching method. He was worried about the decline in traditional Christian morality. His observations about the laziness of some university students and professors and his view that university posts are frequently sinecures have a decidedly contemporary conservative ring.[6]

The more contemporary corporate state version of conservative economic thought has no grand theory. It is based on the "nautral" evolution of economic enterprise from small and local to large and international. The key here is accommodation and compromise. Corporations and politics have mutually adapted to each other's needs in a pragmatic way. Benjamin Disraeli is frequently credited as being among the first to have a managed. corporate state view of economics and politics. Certainly he capitalized upon it in his political career. A U.S. analogue might be Theodore Roosevelt. More contemporary, academic writers in this vein are A.A. Berle, George Lodge, and Nigel Harris (though Harris' exposition is critical)[7]

There are signifigant differences among these two streams of thought, as even this brief exposition suggests. The differences have exercised the conservative economists for several generations. For present purposes, however, it is important to emphasize the essential similarity between them. Both streams view economic growth as primary. Private property and market operations are essential ingredients of liberty. Individual opportunity is framed within the existing economic order; only incremental changes to that order are ever desirable. The question of government's intervention in the economy is therefore reduced to an instrumental question. It is not a fundamental question because the ultimate aims of both streams of economic thought are essentially the same. These aims, again, are national strength, economic growth, personal liberty, and social order maintained through a system of private property.

A third type of conservative thinking may be labeled "sociological", though identification of this as a separate type would be distinctly a non-Burkean to conservative understandings of the word. (He would not have separated political from social.) Here again we have, what I will label for purposes of identification, two streams: a logical positivist stream and a more interpretive, literary stream. Conventional wisdom has it that logical positivism begins in nineteenth century Europe with Comte and Durkheim. Parsons is its main generative source in this country, and functionalism is its guiding principle.[8] Merton, Lazersfeld, and, at the present time, James Coleman are leading lights.

For these sociologists, society is to be understood through the organization of myriad bits of empirical data according to reason. Putting these bits together yields an objective and scientific picture of reality by showing the interrelations among the bits. In this way social organisms are quite like biological organisms: they have parts that relate, the parts can be interpreted at various levels of description and abstraction, parts and/or the entire organism can be said to function well or badly in relation to norms.[9]

The literary and interpretive stream might be represented in the present period by Robert Nisbet.[10] Nisbet writings are in a normative tradition as opposed to the positivist tradition above. He emphasizes shared historical experiences, myths, symbols and community as keys to legitimate authority in the social world. Institutions such as the family, the church, the community, the state, and the workplace have their own inherent legitimacy based on their histories and their separate functions. And certainly Education could be added to this list. Concentrations of power in any one of these is bad. Currently in human history the hegemonic institution is the state, which is illegitimately seeking too much control over the others.

Both these sociological traditions make an appeal to history as the basis for social legitimacy. Both favor empirics over grand theory. In these ways both traditions have some claim to the conservative label.

---

insert table one about here

In this brief presentation of conservatism I have taken a very expansive view of its meaning. I have tried to include all main streams of social thought which a substantial body of opinion has labeled "conservative", even if opinion is by no means unanimous. Talcott Parsons, for example, disdained the label in connection with his own work. He called himself a liberal, (in my personal view with considerable legitimacy). Locke, of course, predated Burke, the "father" of conservatism in my exposition. Anyone having even a passing acquaintance with Locke's writings may have a hard time fitting him in as a conservative. But he is invoked, and so ideological boundaries are amor phous.

One must, however, come to terms with the word "ideology" in a paper of this sort. I will do briefly here, defining it simply as an interpretation of the world in accord with certain facts and predispositions. It is Ideology which allows us to incorporate the new and novel within the framework of the tried and true. Ideology is often invoked to galvanize concerted social action. Sometimes ideology is contrasted with "reality" as a flight of fancy. [11]

This, I realize, will not be a very satisfactory definition to many. It does not fully distinguish "ideology" from "ideals" or even "models". It offers no grand visions or unified systems linking a wide variety of phenomena, events, data and levels of consciousness. But the fact is that most conservatives claim not to do these things.

I would put it rather that conservatives are reluctant theorizers, and, especially, *responsive* theorizers. They are driven to theorize only by inimical human events. Doubtless Edmund Burke would have preferred that the revolution in France had not occurred, thereby relieving him of the necessity of writing his classic tome. Even in the contemporary era, when society has vested nearly all its reflective capacities with professional academics who make their living by writing, there is very little conservative theorizing. Now as in the past conservative theory tends to be rooted in history rather than in telic visions. Daniel Bell's work for instance, it is written largely as a reaction to leading trends.[12] Practical pursuits, more than ideological ones, appeal to the creative side of the conservative mind.

With this background for the words "conservatism" and "ideology", I decided to proceed as follows. First I would read the works of conservative educationists with the intention of creating my own profile of their thought. I narrowed the field by including only those that had written about both the state and education. With regard to politics they had to have written on at least some of the following topics: the origins and nature of the state, criteria for membership, appropriate functions and methods for collective decision-making. With regard to education they

TABLE ONE
SOME DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF CONSERVATIVE THINKING

POLITICAL

-acceptance of the existence of human differences in most worldly matters
-distrust of abstract theories; emphasis on context and intuition as well as reason
-legitimate authority based on multiple sources: tradition (often including religious tradition), nationalism, precedent, symbol, and empirics.
-obligations and duties precede rights and privileges. Included among obligations and duties are those to past and future generations.

ECONOMIC

-the centrality of private property and market structures
-enterprise unfettered by government OR ALTERNATIVELY enterprise assisted by government, (but very rarely enterprise owned by government)
-contractarian view of politics and society

SOCIOLOGICAL

-society analogized to a living organism containing many parts
-better understanding and wise management derive from a focus on the parts, (as opposed to grand visions of the society as a whole)
-various social institutions each have their own ordained roles
-pragmatic emphasis in dealing with social problems; incremental emphasis in offering solutions

---

should have written about some of the following: human nature (or, as conservatives would prefer, the human condition), curriculum, pedagogy, school organization, school aims, and--most important for present purposes--the role of the state and society in education. Arbitrarily, I confined my searches to the twentieth century. The profile would follow the lines I had used for political, economic and sociological conservatism, listing and briefly discussing the main streams of thought.

INSERT TABLE TWO ABOUT HERE

For conservatives the first and most basic mission of education is transmission of the knowledge base to the next generation. The second mission of equal importance involves imbuing the next generation with a sense of the importance of this knowledge base. The finest minds will want to interpret it, reflect creatively about it, and build upon it.

This is in keeping with conservatives' emphasis on tradition as being determinative--or at least highly influential--in setting appropriate human conduct. At any point in time there are many bits of knowledge, attitudes, habits and modes of conduct that might be labeled traditional. How does one sort this out for purposes of deciding what to teach? The answer is this: the single most distinguishing feature of educationally important tradition is its duration through time. If an idea, fact or insight has proven to be insightful generation after generation, it is a prime candidate for inclusion in the curriculum.

Every age has its excesses, conceits, and blind spots. Therefore one must look well beyond contemporaneous writings, social conceptions, and habits of mind to find what is truly and permanently useful. Conservatives frequently rail against contemporary practices, even when those practices have a fairly long lineage.

Child centered pedagogy is a case in point. As an alternative to traditional methods, the idea goes back at least as far as the Eighteenth Century. In

TABLE TWO
CHARACTERISTICS OF CONSERVATIVE THINKING IN EDUCATION

AIMS
-transmission of the world's store of important knowledge and wisdom to the next generation
-creating an appreciation for the importance and urgency of the task above
-preservation, and within the bounds of possibility, improvement of the existing social order

HUMAN NATURE
-acceptance of education as a source of social differentiation among human beings (which is not necessarily a bad thing)
-Learning, especially in its initial stages, is hard work. Effort and diligence are required.

CURRICULUM
-composed around mankind's most permanently useful knowledge, organized according to well accepted bodies of subject matter
-distinction between education and training; disinterested inquiry and immediately useful information; liberal and vocational studies

PEDAGOGY
-teacher-directed learning
-memorization and content mastery essential prerequisites to 'creative thinking'

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION
-no fixed attachment to state control or private control
-attachment instead to the functional separation of learning institutions according to their aims and curricula listed above

ROLE OF THE STATE AND SOCIETY
-state should actively work to promote education as described above OR the state should leave educational institutions alone

---

this limited sense someone might claim it has a tradition behind it. That tradition, however, is largely hortatory and theoretical. The wide spread incorporation of child centered pedagogy in the state schools of English speaking countries is only a couple of generations old. And in most of the rest of the world the idea is still rarely applied.

Child centered pedagogy has close ties with the Enlightenment view that human nature is inherently good. All of us are autonomous and purposive individuals possessing abstract rights. It is society, its conventions, and much of the mankind's accumulated wisdom that has put us in bondage. In education this has led to the view that the individual is the best judge of what he or she should learn, that knowledge and ideas have no special claims on us owing to their importance in times past, and that contemporary insights are very often more valid than ancient truths.

Conservatives certainly find nothing wrong with trying to interest the child in schoolwork, and using all reasonable efforts to do so. Both the teacher and the pupil gain motivation and task accomplishment. The problem arises in the event that capturing a child's interest becomes the prime concern for the teacher or curriculum designer. The child (or older student) is, by definition, ignorant of the things s/he should know. Self-directed, it is highly improbable that the child will hit upon the desired knowledge and understandings which have taken mankind millennia to create. Of course, the teacher might use highly structured "discovery methods" which will lead the learner swiftly and inevitably toward the desired result--a lab experiment in science class, for instance. But this is nothing more than a tangible and concrete example of knowledge transmission, in no way to be confused with child centered pedagogy. Child centered pedagogy occurs when learning of signifigant knowledge is compromised or postponed to please the immediate wishes of pupils (and often the indolence of teachers as well).

In a democracy everyone has an equal franchise. This has led to the view that just about all types of knowledge, opinion and sentiments are equal too--a view which educational conservatives reject.

With these broad understandings of conservatism in its political, economic, sociological, and educational dimensions I was then ready to address the two main questions posed for this paper:

1. To what extent do conservatives hold congruent views about Education? Do all conservative educationists hold the same beliefs regarding aims, curriculum, pedagogy, organization, human nature, and the state? That is, do *all* conservatives fit the education profile above?

2. To what extent do conservatives hold distinctive views about education? Are conservative educationists also conservative in their politics, economics and sociology? That is, do *only* conservatives fit the education profile above? Or can educational conservatism be compatible with liberalism or radicalism in other dimensions?

I realized at the outset that proving (or at least strongly asserting) the null is a much less demanding task than answering in the affirmative. The affirmative would require examination of every theorist of any significance. But if one could find a substantial disagreement among conservatives as to aims and methods, or prominent political radicals prove to be educational conservatives one need look no further. in answering the question: Is there a conservative ideology of education?

presentation and discussion

This section of the paper will be divided into three sub-sections. The first deals with American writers who advocate traditional content and modes of learning from somewhat different perspectives. They all agree, however, that the first and primary task of education is the inter-generational transmission of knowledge. They are essentialists. And this orientation makes them educational conservatives in the most widely accepted sense of the term.

The second section deals with two Italian theorists of the 1920's and 30's, the left-radical, Antonio Gramsci and the right-radical, Giovanni Gentile. They may seem out of place in a paper confined mainly to Anglo-American traditions. But their works have been translated into English and have

been influential (at different times), especially in political theory. They are two writer/activists who saw the world through very different lenses than the ones we have come to expect from educational theorists with their respective political orientations.

The academic problems of the slower learner are treated from a conservative perspective in section three. Three writers have been selected who offer strikingly different prescriptions to issues of mass education in a democratic state.

disciples of the Great Tradition

The Great Tradition consists simply of the most important knowledge and wisdom to be gleaned from mankind's past accomplishments. Emphasis is on the civilization of the West as distinct from oriental, African, or other sources.

Of course no one can know everything, nor is it important to do so. Therefore, reflections on the tradition itself and its relation to contemporary humanity has been a principal object of concern for conservative theorists. There are, I think five questions one can ask about the Great Tradition. I will organize this section into five questions which different writers answer differently.

1. What *exactly* is the Great Tradition? Can it be described? Can its composition and boundaries be known?

2. Who should be engaged in discipleship? Can everyone come to know and appreciate the Tradition, or is it only or mainly for an elite?

3. What are the uses of the great tradition? Is it practical or liberal, individual or social?

4. How can the education best be organized to convey the Tradition to future generations?

With regard to question one, Albert Jay Nock's 1932 statement is one which few proponents of the Tradition would fault. [13]

...education, traditionally, is the establishment of certain views of life and the direction of certain demands on life, views and demands which take proper account of the instincts of mankind, all in the measure and balance; the instinct of workmanship, the instinct of intellect and knowledge, of religion, of beauty and poetry, of social life and manners. The aim at an inculcation of these views and demands is the Great Tradition of a truly civilized society. The traditional discipline, the process which has been found most convenient to the purpose, is that chiefly of scrutinizing the longest available continuous record of what the human mind has hitherto done with those instincts; what he has made out of them; what its successes and failures have been; and what is to be learned from both (p.54).

This is as close as Nock gets to expressing his educational aims in detail. It is a clear and succinct statement as far as it goes. But it does not offer specifics. There is no discussion of the Tradition's knowledge base, nothing on method, or academic organization. Hence, though few would fault this as an initial expression of the Tradition, for some it suffers from lack of detail.

These omissions cannot be explained by Nock's disinterest in detail because he discusses universities of his day in considerable detail, their student selection procedures, their curriculum, and research agendas. In his view universities have been corrupted by a perverted notion of democratic ideals, a "wholly erroneous notion of democracy...accepting as democratic what was merely indiscriminate" (p. 37). Academically, the nation has confused education with training, a confusion convenient to the perpetuating the egalitarian myth. "...the vast majority of mankind can never be educated. They can, however, be trained; anybody can be trained...and if all hands would simply agree to call training education...the equalitarian side of our theory was safe." (p.59).

These problems can not be righted by reform projects--new management, curriculum, or a deeper resolve. The problems are

rooted in in munderstandings of our fundamental political ideals.

Mr. Flexner says that "a student of Columbia College may study serious subjects in a serious fashion". I do not know what he means by this. The things to be considered, assuming that he be educable as well as serious, are what he gets out of it, and whether his circumstances permit him to get enough out of it to make his exertions worth while. If Mr. Flexner means that an educable person can, in any proper sense of the term get an education at Columbia College, I must disagree with him. I firmly believe that no such thing is possible...in any American institution with which I am acquainted (p.135).

Columbia and other American institutions of higher learning had succumbed to the twin evils of academic egalitarianism and vocationalism, becoming "training schools for the ineducable". In answer to question three, then, the Great Tradition has no practicality whatsoever in American democracy. In fact, it is a counterpoint to the dominant ideology. Clearly, under such circumstances fretting over the details of curriculum, teaching and academic organization in the Great Tradition is a useless task!

There is, however, for Nock a fundamental optimism about the Tradition itself, despite its doom in the United States.

The Great Tradition will go on because the forces of nature are on its side...the self-preserving instinct of humanity...Whole societies may disallow it and set it at nought, as ours has done; they may try to live by ways of their own, by bread alone, by bread and buncombe, by riches and power, by economic exploitation, by intensive industrialism, quality-production, by what you please, but in the end they will find, as so many societies have already found, that they must return and seek the regenerative powers of the Great Tradition, or lapse into decay and death.

Our universities, like our nation as a whole, has followed the false god of material progress. Nock asserted the Great Tradition over and

above the goals of the American democracy as he conceived it.

That he spent most of his academic life engaged in studies of Rabelais gives us some measure of the man. Robert Hutchins (1899-197) was a lawyer and university administrator. And again here parallels emerge here between academic interests and educational views. An advocate of world government and other social causes, Hutchins was, in his way, very much a social activist.

For Hutchins the Great Tradition represented an urgent fight. His task was to "...frame a course of study for American schools, colleges and universities, in light of the capacities of ordinary teachers" (p.13). Victory in this effort was possible. Discussion of such things as instincts, balance, and manners--the language of Nock--represent perhaps, a certain dalliance[14].

When I urge a liberal education for all I am not suggesting that all people must become great philosophers, historians, scientists, or artists. I am saying that they should know how to read , write and figure and that they should understand the great philosophers, historians, scientists and artists (p.88)

Hutchins conception of the Tradition was a very straightforward one. It is, in its essence, something which can be learned from books. Hutchins profound contribution to the Great Tradition was his concept of it as words on a page. Only conceived of in this way can it ever be rendered explicit.

The Hutchins/Adler Great Books series claims to catalogue the most signifigant thoughts of mankind in a single set of volumes. Of course there have been other compendia of important writings. Hutchins and Adler's unique claims were (1) completeness of subject matter and (2) the link to democratic values. The subject matter claim will be left for later, but the civic value of the Great Books needs attention here in light of Nock's elitist claim.

...unless some better kind of liberal education can be invented than the one I have described, we shall be forced to

abandon universal suffrage; for I do not believe men can solve the problems raised by their own aggregation unless they can learn to think for themselves about the fundamental issues of human life and organized society...Men are different. They are also the same. And at least at the present state of civilization the respects in which they are the same are more important than the respects in which they are different...The great productions of mankind are the common heritage of mankind...If every man is a ruler, every man needs the education rulers ought to have. (p.88,9)

Hutchins, then, answers the question about discipleship in a resounding way. Everyone must know the Great Tradition in a democracy. And everyone can know it.

The Great Books, for Hutchins, can be likened to The Bible or the Common Law. These cannot be dismissed because they contain some strange words and places, foreign sounding names, or implausible events. Certainly they cannot be dismissed because it is difficult to understand. The Great Books are a sort of secular canon: the basis of belief and action. If they were obvious and easy, we could comprehend them fully the first time through. The fact that we cannot makes them worthy of lifetime study and continuing interpretation. We may reach different levels of knowledge and understanding about the Books based on our age, aptitudes and interests. But we ignore them at the peril of leading personally and socially empty lives. Though the Great Books editors do not foreclose the possibility of additions in the way the Christian canon does, Adler has remarked that most centuries produce only one or two important new ideas. Thus the content is relatively stable. Like the Common Law it builds slowly.

It follows, then, that all efforts of true education should be geared to the Tradition as a liberal rather than practical study. Hutchins views on university organization follow logically. (p.15). Curricula other than the Great Books should be scrapped. Whatever "...can be learned outside the educational system should be learned outside it" (p.29). The University should not act as a "service station" for applied

research (p.33-34). Vocational training belongs in separate institutes. Big-time athletics can be similarly corrupting; Hutchins did away with intercollegiate football during his tenure as president of the University of Chicago.

E.D. Hirsch differs from Hutchins in his understanding of the Great Tradition, though he too develops a canon he calls *Cultural Literacy* (1987)[15]. The common understandings he invokes are not book length treatments of broad topics but words, phrases, definitions, and ideas that everyone should know. His main aim is reform of primary and secondary education.

...American schools should be able to devise an *extensive* curriculum based on the national vocabulary and arranged in a definite sequence... (the) explicit national vocabulary should, in time, come to be regarded as the basis of a literate education (p. 139)

Hirsch's proposed national vocabulary is 64 pages. It contains items from language, literature, science, history, and popular culture, sports, and other fields. Typical entries include "1914-1918", "amino acids", "Fred Astaire", and "Adonis". The point, however, is not so much *this* list. Some of the items will last only a generation or two as the popular culture changes. (Perhaps Michael Jackson will replace Fred Astaire.) The point is *some* list, agreed upon by all, as necessary for nation building.

One side of Hirsch's common culture derives from a knowledge base in conventional academic and technical fields, and in the *beaux arts.* But the other side is represented by

"a patchwork of scholarly folk materials, old songs, obscure dances, and historical legends, all apparently quaint and local, but in reality selected and reinterpreted by intellectuals to create a culture upon which the life of the nation can rest". (p.83).

This "folk-culture" side of the Hirsch list sharply distinguishes his

thinking from that of Hutchins and Nock. They would insist on the "high culture" only (omitting technical knowledge too). But for Hirsch the Great Tradition is straitforward, accessible, protean, and not terribly profound. Hirsch models his ideas on the school texts of eighteenth and nineteenth century "nation builders" such as Hugh Blair's *Rhetoric* and McGuffey's *Second Eclectic Reader,* though he does not prescribe a single text or teaching method. Hirsch also avoids topics of school organization and governance; thus, he has nothing to add on question five above.

Both Hutchins and Hirsch were professors who "think otherwise", criticizing the particular versions of child-centered teaching theories that dominated in their day. Dewey and Hutchins were contemporaries, and it is Dewey's theories which provide the counterpoint. Dewey is a "social reformer", more than an educator. His theories of "adjustment" lead to curricula of "...miscellaneous dead facts". The student learning information based on her current interests is guaranteed to know only those things that will quickly become obsolete. Hirsch criticizes the more contemporary version of child-centered teaching which he calls "formalism". Formalism is the theory that only reading, writing and thinking *skills* are important. Any content will do as long as it stimulates the child's interest in learning the necessary skills (p.21). The problem with this approach is that it completely ignores the social component of schooling, the common core of knowledge, belief and myth that builds cohesion.

Another version of the Great Tradition is offered by Admiral Hyman Rickover. For Rickover the Tradition takes on directly instrumental importance: building national strength and world power. Rickover's writings In this respect have a distinctly contemporary ring; they presage *A Nation At Risk* and *Politics, Markets, and American Schools.*

Called the "father of the Nuclear Navy", more than other writers discussed here Rickover emphasized science and technology. Though he firmly distinguished between the two (the former is liberal, the latter practical), both were the appropriate business of schools and universities. [16]. A partial list of chapter titles in *Education And*

Freedom [17] (1959) indicates his interests: "Education Our First Line of Defense", "Lead Time and Military Strength", "Pioneering on the Frontiers of Knowledge", and "The Meaning of A Profession: Engineering".

Rickover was interested in excellent education for the bright and able, and an education appropriate to the interests and abilities of the rest. For the average and below average student the public school should provide "broad terminal knowledge" necessary to "fit him into a modern technological society". For the "talented minority", however, Rickover would make high schools more rigorous. These students should be ready for direct entry into professional schools at age 18. Rickover looked favorably on the national school systems of Europe in his day, and he wrote extensively on western European and Russian education.

Excellence cannot be achieved in the comprehensive school. The comprehensive school ideal developed at a time when little was known,

"...of the difference in intellectual endowments; IQ tests had not yet been invented...This ideal runs smack into the incontrovertible fact that is impossible to educate slow, average and fact learners together, if by educating we mean the capacity to think, understand and make wise decisions" (p.134).

Rickover, then, is an educational elitist in the manner of Nock. But unlike Nock, Rickover's concept of the Tradition is *both* liberal *and* practical. Distinctions between the liberal and the practical should not be particularly reflected in the curriculum. Both are vital to the work of the nation.

Both Rickover and Nock would reserve participation in the Great Tradition for a talented few, thereby denying the more egalitarian impulses of Hutchins and Hirsch. Though Rickover's concept of the Tradition is quite different from the others discussed here, but it is, nevertheless, a conservative conception. Knowledge is located

outside the learner; it is something to studied, mastered, internalized and finally incorporated into behavior. Rickover's endorsement of early pupil tracking, with an appropriate marketable competency for each student at the end of the track, can be viewed as a form both of school choice and a national curriculum. Reagan and Thatcher should be pleased. But his views on school organization and discipleship in the Tradition would be an anathema to Hutchins and Hirsch.

It can be argued, with considerable legitimacy in my opinion, that Hutchins and Hirsch are not political and social conservatives at all. They are moderate liberals in the "classic" sense, interested in providing equal opportunity for all within the confines of the Great Tradition as they view it. What they are unwilling to do is scrap the Tradition in the name of some novel educational or social agenda. Others will argue that these two really are conservatives, through and through. They have no particular political and social agenda *beyond the knowledge base.* Or, if they do have such an agenda, it is based vaguely on themes like participation and cohesion: status quo types of concepts.

Thorstein Veblen lived from 1857 to 1829. Veblen's politics and economics were liberal to radical. His first book, *The Theory of the Liesure Class* (1899), immediately became a classic and brought him instant celebrity status. The book excoriated the business culture and idle rich of his day. Antibusiness rhetoric and a vituperative writing style were to characterize his work for the rest of his career. [18]

For Veblen the Great Tradition consisted of disinterested scholarship, the pursuit of new knowledge. That pursuit must be driven by "idle curiosity...apart from any ulterior use of the knowledge so gained... (p.4) Alarmingly, disinterested pursuit of the truth is no longer possible because "...discretionary control in matters of university policy now rests finally in the hands of businessmen" (p.63-71). Business domination of boards of trustees had produced a mentality which permeates universities

While it is the work of science and scholarship, roughly what

is known in the American usage as graduate work, that gives it (ie. the university) its rank as a seat of learning and keeps it in countenance as such with laymen and scholars, it is the undergraduate school that...gives statistically formidable results in the way of numerous enrollments, turnover and output (p.73).

Controlled by a business mentality the entire operation of the university has succumbed to "...the traffic in merchantable instruction", and an "aimless utilitarian outlook" in a "boyish imitation" of big business.[19]

The most extreme perversion of the university has been the (Carnegie) credit system, "...a mechanically drawn scheme of tasks" making "...each unit of work required, or rather of credit allowed, equivalent to all other units; otherwise a comprehensive system of scholastic accountancy would not be practicable." The result has been substitution of "impersonal standards and tests" for "the place of personal conference, guidance and association between teachers and students" (p. 200-225).

With regard to question two, however, Veblen believed that universities existed for the academic elite. "The student who comes up to the university is expected to know what he wants...if he falls short, it is his own misfortune, not the fault of the teacher" (p.14). In fact, however, the collegiate degree, "...certifying honorable discharge", has become merely "... a requisite of gentility." Veblen rejected the pragmatic view of Dewey and James that universities have a broader social and practical mission, opposing not only business funded research but such "...means of dissipation as fraternities, clubs, and the extensive range of extra-scholastic traffic known as 'student activities'. (Thomas Sowell, ibid. at pp.175-6.)

Veblen's view of the Tradition--pursuit of scholarship and discovery of new knowledge--is unique among the writers considered here. It is, of course, a commonly held view today and not a particularly conservative view. Veblen is distinctly conservative, however, in

other matters, notably academic organization and intellectual elitism. In these two respects Veblen and Nock--arguably the most thoroughgoing of all American conservatives--held the same opinions. Veblen and Hutchins strongly parted company on the matter of student elitism; however in matters of university organization Hutchins and Veblen saw the same dangers. Veblen agrees with Rickover on the limited capacities of the average student, but parts company strongly on the aims of education.

The Englishman Michael Oakeshott's views will be treated briefly because he represents yet another widely held view of the Great Tradition: namely, that it is in some sense ineffable.

> If this inheritance were composed only of natural "things" or artifacts, then its transmission would hardly be more than a mechanical formality, a handing over of physical objects. But it is not. It is composed of human activities, aspirations, sentiments, images, beliefs, beliefs, modes of understanding, customs and practices; in short states of mind...a postulant to a human condition... which sees himself as the mirror of an inheritance of human understandings

With this elegant statement we have come almost full circle back to Nock. Both define the Tradition mainly in terms of its recipient. For Nock it is an "inculcation of views" rendered possible by "scrutinizing the longest available continuous record" of mankind. The more idealistic Oakeshott invokes "states of mind", "postulants" and "mirrors of inheritance". But there is more here than a difference in tone. For Nock the Tradition is sufficiently concrete that we can surely know it has been lost in America. For Oakeshott is is not a matter of lost and found. The Tradition is a pursuit, an engagement of "self-disclosure" and "self-enactment" which extends far beyond the school.[20]

Summarizing, we can answer briefly the five questions at the head of this section. The Tradition exists independently of the learner. It is not for her to define or interpret in a highly personal way, within some purely contemporary context. Interpretations of each element

of the tradition must be made in light of its other elements, linking the course of human events across time and into the future. There are substantial disagreements, however, as to *precisely* what the tradition is.

The school's role is to engage students in discipleship of the tradition. For some writers this means *all* students. Other writers would confine discipleship to the best and brightest. Slower pupils are fundamentally incapable; they would hold back the rest; they can encounter nothing but failure and frustration, which is inhumane; society is better served if slower pupils are instructed in manual and technical skills rather than being educated. All these reasons are offered by those would confine the tradition to a few. The democratic ideal of participation and social cohesion are two reasons offered by those writers who would include *everyone* in the type of learning *anyone* receives.

The Tradition's uses are mainly liberal, though for some writers they are practical too. Educational institutions have grown too large and their purposes have become too diffuse to attend to the Tradition effectively.

Gramsci and Gentile: a confusion in terminology, historiography and ideology

On the face of it Italian education and politics of the 1920's seems an odd source to look for insight into anglo-american conservatism. When I happened to pick up Professor Entwistle's book, *Antonio Gramsci: Conservative Schooling for Radical Politics,* I was not particularly looking for information on the present topic. What I found, however, was right on point.[21]

Both the Italians present special problems in interpretation. Aside from the language barrier, Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*[22] consist of writings which had to pass through censors. Codes and other forms of misinformation were used; Gramsci apparently requires an especially careful analysis. Gentile was an education professor and an avowed

Deweyist. He did much of his euducational writing prior to his accession to power as Mussolini's Education minister [23] Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1960. He had to appear consistent while still seeking the preferment of *Il Duce*. Gentile may have modified his views toward that end. Though Mussolini himself obviously thought Gentile was an effective Fascist, some of his successors in Mussolini's later Education Ministries did not particularly share the view. [24.] To the best of my knowledge, there never has been any question about Gramsci's Marxist credentials.

The present discussion, however, will not so much be one of Gramsci's and Gentile's thought as a discussion of Entwhistle's interpretation. Entwhistle's position is that Gramsci held the conventional Marxist-Lenninist view of education which is that

"...the tuition, training and education of youth must be based on the material that was bequeathed to us by the old society...you will make a great mistake if you attempt to draw the conclusion that one can become a Communist without acquiring what human knowledge has accumulated" (Entwhistle quoting Lenin p.43).

Gramsci and Lenin were thus "conservative educationists". Gramsci "...displayed a nostalgia for the old secondary school", (ie. pre-Gentile), and spoke of its " 'degeneration' ...without a base in concrete information" (Entwhistle's words p.47).

...previously, the pupils at least acquired a certain 'baggage' or 'equipment' of concrete facts. Now that the teacher must be specifically a philosopher and aesthete, the pupil does not bother with concrete facts. (Gramsci's words, quoted p.47 in Entwhistle)

Gramsci's special contribution, according to Entwhistle, was to fashion Gentile's (more or less) child-centered pedagogy as an anthesis to the Marxist-Lenninist education tradition. For Entwhistle Gentile's 1923 ministerial reforms betray a certain, though not complete, Progressive view. Entwhistle cites the

following summary of those reforms, in his paraphrase

(i) The intention to liberate the elementary school from a Herbartian oriented pedagogy and from syllabuses requiring the study of facts, formulae, etc...

(vi) The reform of the examination system in order to assess the student's potential for judgement, 'creativity', etc. rather than his mastery of factual knowledge (p.185).

Gentile's contemporaries largely confirm Entwhistle's reading of the 1923 document and therefore Gentile's Progressive intent. [25] Thus, we have "Entwhistle's paradox" the combination of "conservative schooling" with "radical politics" and "liberal schooling" with the "the politics of the right".

With no certain knowledge of the matter, my speculation is that Entwhistle is trying to resuscitate the notion of an academically rigorous, "high culture", education among radicals of our present day. If this is his project, I have no particular quarrel with it. But I do think he misuses the word "conservative" (and not to the advantage of his project). If by "conservative" he meant teaching and learning of traditional subject matter --the transmission of knowledge and facts to the next generation--he had a much more precise word at his disposal. Instead of "conservatism", Entwhistle should have used the word "essentialism". That word does describe rightly the Communist views above.

If Entwhistle means by conservatism a wider set of dispositions, knowledges, and beliefs relating to politics, the economy and sociology as well as education, then he did not make his case. In fact, he makes the opposite and obvious case. For Marxists mastery of "bourgeois knowledge" has a very focused political purpose, "*relentless criticism of all existing conditions*". (Marx in Entwhistle, p. 45). It is the Party's job to turn criticism into praxis, to create "...new integral and totalitarian intelligentsias and crucibles where the unification of theory and practice can take place" (Gramsci in Entwhistle p.164-5). To paraphrase Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, I've met

conservatives, and believe me Lenin, Marx and Gramsci are no conservatives. The half-title of Entwhistle's book should read *Essentialist* Schooling and Radical Politics.

Entwhistle's secondary paradox, to which he gives much less attention, is the one between left-wing schooling and right-wing politics. Entwhistle points out that the English education theorist G.H. Bantock (to be considered below in a different connection) feels that McCartyy's witch hunts of the 1950's may be "associated with the mental climate introduced by Deweyism over the past fifty years". But according to Entwhistle,"...Progressive educationists are rarely committed to Fascism...the relationship between the two is not a logically necessary connection" (p.85).

The conjecture of a link is well beyond the bounds of this present project. Suffice it to say here that just as Gramsci was no conservative, neither was Gentile in any sense of the word. Fascism conventionally understood involves the incorporation of the individual will mythically and ideally into the will of the state. Fascism emphasizes spontaneity, and action and anti-intellectualism as opposed to conservatives emphasis on reflection and caution and moderate rationalism. [26]

The larger point to be made here is that the word "conservative" is used with considerable vagueness in much educational writing. It is very often an epithet which describes a particular policy, "school choice" "tougher standards" or what have you. One of my projects is to suggest that in conservative thinking in education is not mainly a policy or set of policies because conservatives may disagree on policy. Conservative thinking is not one or two isolated educational principles because some principles at some points in time will shared widely across the political and social spectrum. Educational conservatism--like liberalism and radicalism--requires a larger frame of reference, and a matrix of beliefs linking to other social elements. Viewed in this way conservatism can provide a useful a vantage point for understanding the educational endeavor, and perhaps, inform practice.

the education of slower learners: three conservative policies

Large numbers of students leave school with the most minimal levels of education. At present no educational matter seems more important to Britons and Americans than poor school results. This problem is, and has been for years, the object of countless studies and research projects in both countries.

The dominant liberal premise in the U.S., and increasingly in Britain, is that all learners are created equal and will learn just about the same things if given the right environment. Some children, of course, persist in violating the premise. They do not learn the same content with the same rapidity as other children. The solution to this problem is to classify such children as "exceptional" or "culturally deprived" or "special" or very recently, "differently abled". The nomenclature must change rapidly to keep ahead of the opprobrium heaped upon it, but the object remains the same: to "mainstream" everyone. Each of us, just as far as possible, must be made like all the rest of us. Since, axiomatically, we are all the same 'deep down', we can and must correct the educational failures among us through better techniques and interventions. And this, in general terms, is the liberal ideal.

Conservative thinking is quite different. It follows not from any ideal but from the premise that history has shown humans to be different in most of their capacities and interests. Educational treatments which have as their object bringing us to the same end point are ill-conceived. What is needed are educational programs which reflect our different human natures. Needed too is a diminution of the social angst which attends the failure of liberal projects. The three educational theorists discussed here make very different policy proposals. But each proposal proceeds from this conservative view.

Ross Finney's book *A Social Philosophy of Education* (1928) is not conservative in all ways, but his Chapter XX, "Followership And the

Duller Intellects" offers a conservative perspective on a standard educational practice. [27] That practice, which has become much more widespread since Finney's time, is intensive tutoring of the low achiever in resource rooms, through peers, teachers aids, and in and other ways. "...We must actually force-feed them with the concentrated results of expert thinking. To this end there is immense occasion for memoriter training and sheer drill" (p.395).The method, then, particualrly in our day, is conventional enough.

The content of the memeritor is reminiscent of a part of E.D. Hirsch's lexicon:

> catchwords, proverbs, epigrams, slogans, witticisms, rhymes, old sayings, catechisms, and the like. They are capsules in which concentrated philosophies are swallowed. They are token money, the credit symbols by which intellectual exchange is carried on...This clinking coinage of the collective intellect is among the most important means of social integration any culture can possess (p.393).

The purpose, however, is not Hirsch's aim of producing a common national culture built on similar understandings of the memeritor and similar experiences with it. Finney's purpose is letting people fall along an intellectual continuum, using the memoriter as a tool toward that end.

> To teach *what*, memoriter, to all; but to the bright teach also *why*,...between the dullest and the brightest there are all gradations in the possibility of understanding and independent thinking. But all can memorize the same catchwords and react accordingly; while the dull can do little more than that (p.396).

It is then, finally, not common experiences that Finney aims at but building reliable, conventional opinions and socially appropriate behaviors. "The safety of democracy is not to be sought in the intellectual independence of the duller masses but in their intellectual dependence. Not in how they think, but in what they

think" (p.389).

This is a distinctly illiberal conception. It accommodates the democratic need for universal schooling within the framework children's differing intellectual abilities. But it very directly attempts the engineering of social outcomes. The knowledge, interests, opinions, and behaviors of the duller half of the population would be formed by the brighter half. Though not slaves the dullards are automatons, not morally independent and sentient human beings. Finney argues that this is in accord with their natures. But his ideal is rejected by nearly everyone, and he himself realized the "danger of misunderstanding" his plan. Yet viewed as a positive conception rather than a normative one, Finney does, for some, explain rather insightfully the social role of the school in the contemporary liberal state.

Arthur Bestor offers a second resolution to the problem of human differences within the framework of democratic education. The elements in his solution involve the curriculum on one hand, the social and academic needs of pupils on the other. [28]

With regard to the curriculum Bestor follows Hutchins "high culture" principles, and his supporting rationale,"... a 'single educational ladder'which the rich and poor might climb together". The school must concentrate on "intellectual values", not to build an aristocracy but to

"...furnish to every man and woman the opportunities that were once enjoyed only by an aristocarcy"... Whether our intellectual life is in reality democratic depends upon whether the masses of people are reading mature books, handling complex ideas, revealing a profound comprehension of history and science..." (p. 87).

It is, however, clear to Bestor that not everyone has the same interests and aptitudes for intellectually demanding material. Therefore he proposed a dual system of social promotion and academic tracking for children wending their way through school. For social purposes "...the class of 1947, the year being that of his birth

is a class he could never flunk out of". Students would be in that class for all non-academic activities. But a radically different grouping would be introduced for instructional purposes, "gradually divorcing academic grade levels from chronological age" (p.302).

The academic tracking would be based on three principles (1) the student's mental age, that is her ability"... to handle with equal comprehension the reasoning on which the class depends", (2) the student's academic background in the particular subject, and (3) the student's ability to grasp the new material actually presented, as measured by I.Q. [29] In other words, "a system of strictly enforced prerequisites" with tight controls over class assignment in all three categories to assure highly homogeneous grouping.

Bestor claims his plan can be effected "...without disturbance to natural social groupings and without raising any demoralizing problems of prestige and status" (p.302). Bestor's claim, however, does illustrate a line of demarcation between conservative and egalitarian principles. Supporting egalitarianism are those who would would turn Bestor on his head with the claim that we can have social promotion at no cost to academic achievement.[30] Conventional liberal education policy has followed neither viewpoint consistently: academic considerations make the Bestor plan appealing, but social considerations make it distasteful. The result has been the tug of war between "equity" and "excellence" with no clear resolution possible.

The English theorist G.H. Bantock has a third and quite unique perspective on the education of slow learners. [31] He essentially rejects the notion of a common culture into which Finney's dullards would be incorporated at a minimal level, and which Bestor would parse out in carefully modulated doses. Bantock's vision is of a society including (at least) two cultures, a high culture and a folk culture. The two cultures are not equally important. The high culture "...represents a more deliberate, refined and sophisticated exploitation of human potentiality--as poetry is superior to pushpin". Nevertheless, "most human activities offer opportunities for excellence", even though they may be more or less important in the

larger scheme of things.

In this connection schooling should enable less able children "to realize their natures as much in their own way as our able children realize theirs through intellectual accomplishment". "Natures" for Bantock are not some set of rationalized, abstract qualities of humanity in general. They may be thought of as individual potentials conditioned one's circumstances. "...possibilities of growth, sensitivities, and awarenesses...which are traditionally revealed by the folk" (p. 221).

These folkways are dimensions of life which our " 'rational' education leaves untouched". School curricula are aimed at a high culture for everyone, or, in the poorer schools, an empty mime of the high culture. Bantock would scrap most of the traditional curriculum, and replace them with "fields of interest" relevant to the non-academic child's "level of consciousness". Bantock's four areas are, the affective life, the domestic life, the physical life and the environmental life. School activities emphasize the tactile, the psychomotor activities frequently organized around specific life experiences--repairing a small motor, considerations in buying furniture, etc. Bantock does not offer this as a "soft option", but as "...an introduction into a Way of life based on what is most fundamental in their existence" (p.222).

We have a thoroughgoing child-centered curriculum here, and this from a theorist with impeccable conservative credentials! (Bantock wrote Black Papers.) Three elements, I think, save it from a classification as "liberal". First, Bantock makes it very clear that this curriculum is for academically less able children, not all children. To be sure, the academically less able are, for Bantock, the large majority. But the Great Tradition will still have its disciples. That there are only a few disciples, strengthens, not weakens, the Tradition. A second conservative element here is the emphasis on folkways in the curriculum, now a familiar conservative theme owing to prior discussions of Hirsch and Finney. Although the three writers use this element in distinctive ways, it is very clearly a conservative element. Radicals like Lenin and Gramsci view folkways as opiates to class consciousness. The final conservative element, which makes

Bantock so distinctive, is his nearly total omission of the political. Bantock claims merely that "...it is out of the satisfaction of individual lives that such social harmony as is attainable in this world can come and not out of some attempt to bring about cohesion where no such cohesion exists" (p.204). Bantock provides a baffle to the Liberal view calling for involvement in government as everyone's civic duty. His "less able" have little interest in statecraft; there are, for them, quite simply, so many more interesting things to do.

As a final observation in this section I offer my own paradox. Conservative educational thinking is usually associated with demanding and rigorous schooling for the highly motivated and bright child. In fact, however, few such schools exist in the public sector in America. Conservative thinking has had little impact in the main area of its public attention. Conservative education theory related to slow learners is very obscure; yet two of its theories actually seem fairly compelling as explanations of practice. Schools are very interested, as Finney supposed they should be, in developing reliable opinions and behaviors in the low achieving, problem child. Bestor's ideal of tracking is a viable and much used option in schools today.

Conclusion

This paper began with a brief recitation of conservative education policies under Reagan and Thatcher, trying to see how their initiatives compare to the broad sweep of conservative educational thinking. Political, economic and sociological conservatism were discussed in general terms. Conceptions and misconceptions of educational conservatism were discussed in detail.

At this point some conclusions on the research questions can be drawn. To repeat the questions

1. To what extent do conservatives hold congruent views about Education? And
2. To what extent do conservatives hold distinctive views about education?

Regarding question one, thinking first of all of those theorists who

share broadly conservative political and social views and then asking, "What are their educational views" we have some similarities. Nock, Rickover, Oakeshott, Finney and Bantock are elitist conservatives who believe strongly in social differentiation. They have no high stake interests, as Hutchins and Bestor do, in universal political participation. The conservatives believe in limited access to an education for the high culture or the folk culture. Access depends on academic ability. A relatively timeless and stable curriculum is emphasized. These conservatives would all reserve the high culture for those with the highest abilities. Rickover excepted, the others see the aim of education as preparation for life rather than earning a living. The concern with school organization was that business ethics are potentially corrupting. A university is not a business and should not be run like one.

Regarding question two, and holding constant persons with similar educational views we can ask, "Where do they stand on political, economic or sociological conservatism?". If we consider the "high culture" essentialists, we cover nearly the entire spectrum of socio-political opinion, From Lenin and Gramsci on the far left through to the moderate leftist, Veblen, then over to Bestor and Hutchins and finally to Bantock and Nock. (Only Gentile's fascism is missing.) Essentialism--belief that The Great Tradition is the one best object of study--is not a distinguishing conservative belief. It seems to be a necessary, not sufficient, criterion for conservatism

The question of discipleship--who should study the Tradition--is a defining element. High culture conservatives are quite willing and even eager to entrust the Tradition to a minority; High culture liberals and radicals, believe it's for everyone.

The question of whether the Tradition should include liberal studies only or practical studies as well is not a defining element. Writers of all political persuasions emphasize distinguish the liberal from the practical as the difference between education and training.

The question of academic organization does not distinguish political

right from left. Writers from Veblen to Nock believe in institutional separation for liberal and practical studies. The creeping business mentality is considered a threat to education even by the conservative theorists dealt with here. Rickover is an exception. He favors a close link between universities, the military and government.

Differing conceptions of the Tradition were reviewed at the end of that section. Writers for that section were selected because of their unique educational views and clarity of expression, not for their political and social views. There are no distinguishing liberal, radical or conservative definitions of the Tradition but there are distinguishing political views on its uses.

Regarding the current politics, the profile of the most thoroughgoing conservative theorists fits the Reagan and Thatcher programs poorly. The politicians emphasize academic rigor for everyone, but these theorists feel large portions of the population wont be up to such demands. The theorists want smaller school and university systems, independent of government control. Reagan and Thatcher want to extend the powers of the state in education. Choice certainly is no problem for these theorists, but that don't emphasize it as the politicians do.

These observations go no distance toward *proving* that Reagan and Thatcher are not conservatives--though I think there is broad consensus that their education programs are a mix of conservatism and moderate liberalism. Nor are these theorists necessarily the only ones or the best authorities. The differences between these politicians and these theorists only show that there are no fixed tenants or checklists for educational conservatism.

In the final analysis conservative thinking in education cannot be understood through a particular political program but only through a convergence of ideas. Whether in politics or education, conservative social conceptions are properly viewed as reactions to Enlightenment thinking and evolutions of that thinking down to the present. "Natural rights" and other such abstractions are to be avoided. Concreteness and past experiences are emphasized. The ways in which humans

differ from one another are more important than the ways in which we are the same. Projects aimed at making us the same, economically, socially, or educationally are likely to fail; projects reflecting our natural proclivities to be different have more chance of success. When reforms are necessary conservatives consult the most permanent, durable and satisfactory set of traditions they can find as their surest guide.

But there is a sense in which most reforms are of limited use. The safest and soundest course usually lies in natural social evolutions, not in someone's reform projects. The status quo may not be perfect, but it is often preferable to someone's vision. The past and future are inextricably linked. We are here only a short time. Our main task is to seek the best from our past, interpret it, and pass it on. This is about all that can be said.

NOTES

1. The Republican Party Platform of 1980, *1980 C.Q. Almanac.* Washington, D.C. Congressional Quarterly Inc. 1980. p.62-B and 63-B; The Republican Party Platform of 1984, *1984 C.Q. Almanac.* Washington, D.C. Congressional Quarterly Inc. 1984. pp.49-B to 51-B; *The Education Reform Act of 1988* , London: H.M.S.O. 1988.; "The Black Papers". London: The Critical Quarterly, c.1970.

2. Nigel Harris, *Beliefs In Society.* London: C. A. Watts, 1968. pp110-111. Thomas H. Jones, ""The Contradictions of Conservatism" . *Zeitschrift für internationale erziehungs-und socialwissenschaftliche Forschung. vol 6* no. 2. pp. 285-302. . Miriam E. David, "Parents, Children and the State" in *Excellence Reform and Equity in Education: An International Perspective.* Rosemary Dean (ed.). Occasional Paper Series #31, Comparative Education Center, OISE/SUNY Buffalo.

3. Bruce S. Cooper, "School Reform in the 1980's: the New Right's Legacy," *Educational Administration Quarterly 24,* (3) August 1988, pp.282-298. Detleif Glowka "Anglo-German Perceptions of Education," *Comparative Education 25,* (3), 1989, 319-332. Don

Smart, "Reagan Conservatism and Hawke Socialism: Whither the Differences in the Education Policies of the U.S. and Australia Federal Governments?" Paper for the American Educational Research Association Conference, San Francisco, 1986.

4. Michael W. Apple, "What Reform Talk Does: Creating New Inequalities in Education" *Educational Administration Quarterly 24,* (3) August 1988, pp.257-71 .

5. John Locke. *An Essay Concerning Human understanding.* John W. Yolton (ed.) London: J. M. Dent, 1961. J.J. Chambliss. *Educational Theory As A theory of Conduct.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987 pp.71-81.

6. Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976. pp. 717-719.

7. A.A. Berle, *The Twentieth Century Capitalist Revolution.* New York: Harcourt Brace, 1954. George Lodge, *The New American Ideology.* New York: Knopf, 1975. Nigel Harris, *Beliefs in Society.* London: Watts, 1968.

8. Graham C. Kinloch, Ideology and Contemporary Sociological Theory. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1981. and Svi H. Shapiro, "Functionalism, Ideology and the Theory of Schooling: A review of Studies in the History of American Education," *Paedagogica Historica* Vol. 22 (2) 1982, pp. 157-172.

9. Talcott Parsons, "On Building Social System Theory: A Personal History" *Daedalus* 99, Fall 1970 pp. 826-881. Talcott Parsons, "The Points of View of the Author" *The Social Theories of Talcott Parsons.* in M. Black Ed. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1961.

10. Robert Nisbet, *The Quest For Community.* San Francisco: ICS Press, 1990

11. Julius Gould, "Ideology" in *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences.* J.

Gould and W.L. Kolka (eds.) London: Tavistock, 1964, p.315.

12. see for instance Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* .New York: Basic Books, 1976.

13. Albert Jay Nock, *The Theory of Education In The United States.*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1932.

14. Robert Hutchins, *The Conflict In Education.* New York: Harper & Row, 1953.

15. E.D. Hirsh, *Cultural Literacy, What Every American Needs to Know.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

16. "Liberty, Science and Law" A lecture to The Newcomen Society In North America. New York: The Newcomen Society, 1969

17. Hyman Rickover, *Education And Freedom.* New York: Dutton, 1959.

18. Thorsten Veblen *The Higher Learning in America: A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Business Men.* Stanford, CA.: Academic Reprints, 1954.

19. Thomas Sowell, "Veblen's Higher Learning in America after fifty years" pp. 175-187 in *Education: Assumptions versus History,* Stanford: The Hoover Institution Press, 1986.

20. Michael Oakeshott, "Education: The engagement and its frustration" pp.19-49 in *Education and the Development of Reason,* R.F. Dearden, P.H. Hirst, and R.S. Peters (eds.) London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1972.

21. Harold Entwistle, *Antonio Gramsci: Conservative Schooling for Radical Politics.* London: Routledge, 1979.

22. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From Political Writings.* London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977.

23. Giovanni Gentile, *The Reform of Education.* London: Benn, 1923. and Giovanni Gentile, *Genesis and Structure of Society.* Urbana: Illinois, 1960.

24. see L. Minio-Pulello. *Fascist Education in Italy.* Oxford University Press: 1946.

25. see also L.A. Williams, "The Reform of Secondary Education In Italy", *The School Review XXXIII,* 1925, pp.201-207. Adolph Meyer, "Education In Modern Italy" , *School And Society XXII,* 1925, pp. 96-99.

26. William Ebenstein, *Today's Isms.* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1967.

27. Ross Finney, *A Social Philosophy of Education* New York: Macmillan, 1928.

28. Arthur E. Bestor, The Restoration of Learning. New York: Knopf, 1955.

29. I am not sure #1 and #3 are different

30. Jeannie Oakes *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality* .New Haven: Yale, 1985; David Labaree, "Setting the Standard: Alternative Policies for Student Promotion," *Harvard Educational Review 54,* (1), 1984. pp.86-87.

31. G.H. Bantock, *Education in an Industrial Society.* London: Faber and Faber, 1963.